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Practicality and Value: Historical Influences on Museum Studies in the United States

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Practicality and Value

Historical Influences on Museum Studies in the United States

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Abstract

The emphasis on the practical concerns and quotidian duties of the museum worker characterizes US Museum Studies as vocational training, rather than a more theoretical field of study. Such practicality is often attributed to the American[1] focus on individualism, pragmatism and sometimes empiricism. The reality is that American Museum Studies is a child of Industrial Age thinking and a clear descendent of British origins. It is concerned with the tracking and protection of wealth and punctuated by the lingering Puritanical requirement of usefulness in all things. This article will summarize two art museum models that arose in the United States following its Civil War and the impact of these models on the subsequent emergence of the first Museum Studies course in the US.

1. For ease and clarity, I use the term "American" to denote the United States culture.

Key Words: Museum Studies, United States, Art History, Industrialization

Résumé

Valeurs et sens pratique : influences historiques des Museum Studies aux Etats-Unis

La muséologie n'existe pas aux États-Unis; les *Museum Studies* ressemblent peu aux autres cursus développés à travers le monde. Le renforcement des aspects pratiques et de la gestion quotidienne caractérise les *Museum Studies* ou études muséales aux États-Unis, en tant que formation professionnelle, au détriment du développement d'un champ théorique. La mise en exergue de ce volet pratique est souvent attribuée à l'individualisme, au pragmatisme et à l'empirisme américain. En réalité, les études muséales américaines sont le fruit de la révolution industrielle et de la pensée britannique. Aux États-Unis, elles se préoccupent de la gestion et du maintien de la richesse, tout en étant imprégnées d'un puritanisme utilitariste. Cet article présente les deux modèles de musées apparus aux États-Unis à la suite de la guerre civile, ainsi que leur impact particulier sur l'émergence du premier cours de *Museum Studies* aux États-Unis.

Mots clés : Muséologie, États-Unis, Histoire de l'art, Industrialisation

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The "Brown Decades" and the "Gilded Age"

Prior to the United States Civil War the earliest US museums, peculiar combinations of cabinets of curiosities, patriotic instruction and religiously acceptable entertainment, had become either circus side shows (Schofield, 1989) or dusty university relics (Bennett, 1995, p. 2; Conn, 1998, p. 8; Murray, 1904, pp. 187-188; Neil, 1975, p. 46; Rasse, 1999, p. 13). Following in the British tradition, "museums" in the US had traditionally been the province of science, whereas "galleries" were reserved for art. American artistic taste was still split between pro-American and pro-European sentiments as vestiges of the American Revolution and the War of 1812. And Puritan religious views further complicated the emergence of artistic institutions (Neil, 1975; Silverman, 1976) as much as they would eventually play a role in the interest in industrial design (Harris, 1962, p. 561). Art was still deemed frivolous–a remnant of European ostentation-unless it could be proved useful, whereas science was glorified as embodying the Spirit of the Enlightenment and providing a path to personal and national progress. Echoing this sentiment of the superiority of science over art, then President of the Academy of Natural Sciences stated, "[Science] stirs no sensual emotions, provokes no admiration for what is false, but inclines the observer to perceive that the truth, nature itself, is more worthy of respect and admiration than any imitation or likeness of it (Ruschenberger, 1871, p. 18, cited by Conn, 1998, p. 40),"

The Civil War (1861-1864) had transformed an agricultural nation into an industrial one, ushering in the accompanying urban development, immigration and materialism (McLanathan, 1973, p. 139). Rapid expansion of industrialization, lead to rapid economic growth in the US. Mechanized production sought cheap ways to produce more product. The US soon leapt ahead of Britain's industrialization, leaving behind a wake of pollution so extensive this period was called the "Brown Decades". "Rivers filled with refuse…flowed past cities covered with soot." (Mumford, 1931, p. 63) Industrialization transformed business. Businessmen emerged who thought only about output, streamlining and profit.

The Brown Decades nourished and fertilized a subsequent period of abundance. "Beneath the crass surface, a new life was stirring in the department of American thought and culture that had hitherto been barren, or entirely colonial and derivative." (Ibid., p. 20) To some this was the Golden Age of America, its first moment of prosperity and power since its founding. But others deemed it the "Gilded Age" (Twain, Warner, Hoppin, Stephens, & Williams, 1873) taking aim at the thin veneer of wealth masking a corrupt core. The Reconstruction after the Civil War had renewed the efforts to forge a national identity, and the Gilded Age of conspicuous consumption finally produced enough wealth to seriously pursue the creation of the nation's first fine art museums. It is from these that the museum age blossoms in the US, fostering new ideas about what museums were and who they served.

In this context, the first art museums arise in the US followed by the emergence of the first elements of codified museum administration and the first Museum Studies course. Internationally, the names of George Brown Goode and John Cotton Dana are espoused as significant figures in US Museum Studies. Indeed, they are, but their contributions, and significant ones by others, tend to be presented solely in the context of being how they have paved the way for today's thinking about museums in service to the public, an idea in stark contrast to the dominant art museum model that will emerge and the first Museum studies course in the US. But *Principles of Museum Administration* and the *New Museum* are considerably richer documents when the museums of the "Brown Decades" and the "Gilded Age" come into focus. Indeed, the fuller character of American Museum Studies is revealed when we understand the national emphasis on practicality and value, even – and perhaps especially, when it comes to early museum culture in the US and how it still resonates today.

The First Museums of Fine Art: The Birth of New Museum Models

"Aided by the general decay of strict Puritanism after the bloodlust of the Civil War….the fine arts underwent swift transformation (Mumford, 1931, p. 189)." Insofar as it relates to the historic foundations of museum studies, the Reconstruction was the impetus to finally shed cultural differences of opinion that had persisted since the Revolution in order build national culture.

Thus, in 1876, one hundred years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the nation hosted the *International Exhibition of Arts, Manufacturers, and Products of the Soil and Mine* (Gross & Snyder, 2005) in its original capital (Ingram, 1876), Philadelphia. This "Centennial Exposition", like World Expos before it, was an opportunity for the US to prove its merit as an independent nation. Despite a dozen or so private and public museums collections existing in the US since its founding in 1776, Coleman, in his history of *Museums in America*, states that "the fever of preparation for our first great fair, the Centennial Exposition of 1876, did much to launch the era of museum expansion…by exposing our weakness in design compared to Europe and the Orient…" (1939, p. 18). From this, two strains of art museum arose: one with the goal of making American industry more competitive in terms of pleasing designs, the other to generally improve the taste and culture of Americans. Both types adopted the title "Museum" to attest to their utility and importance to a society still suspicious of fine art.

In Philadelphia, in anticipation of being a repository of objects from the Centennial, the exhibition hall for the arts was constructed as a permanent gallery of fine art and the *Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art* was chartered[2]. Elsewhere in 1876, the *Boston Museum of Fine Arts* opened on July 4th[3] even as the *Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City*, founded in 1870, was still in the midst of constructing its facilities (ibid., p. 17). Among these early institutions, the heritage of the Puritan ethic to prove their practicality and value is clear. We consider them briefly here.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art

Chartered in February of 1876, the then named Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art was to be a legacy of the industrial and manufacture products of the World Expo, but emphasizing the local trades and crafts Its charter establishes: "a Museum of Art…with a special view to the development of the Art Industries of the State, to provide instruction in drawing, painting, modeling, designing, etc., through practical schools, special libraries, lectures

2. She the history of the Philadelphia Museum of Art at http://www.philamuseum.org/information/45-154-18.html
3. See the Museum of Fine Art website at http://www.mfa.org/about

and otherwise."[4] Indicative of the emphasis on industrial design were the first three departments to be named in the new museum: Pottery, Numismatics, and later in 1893 the Department of Textiles, Lace and Embroidery. As European arts holdings increased, the museum retained its desire to appeal to a broad population[5]. Like the Met and MFA, the Pennsylvania Museum and School was governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees composed of wealthy businessmen.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art[6]

That New York had become a major center of finance, industry, commerce and tolerance meant it could supply the necessary wealth and taste of a new aristocracy to its founding. Though there were still strong pro-American sentiments, anti-European sentiments had waned among the rich. When the *Metropolitan Museum of Art* (The Met) was founded in 1870, it was primarily conceived to exhibit the art collected by its wealthy benefactors (Tomkins, 1970) and was unabashedly modeled after the Louvre (Conn, 1998, p. 29).[7]

The founders, "a group of businessmen and financiers as well as leading artists and thinkers of the day"[8] resolved to base the museum's collection of objects "illustrative of the History of Art from the earliest beginnings to the present time," defining Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting as the "three great arts," (Proceedings, 1869) and inaugurated the institution with an exhibition of Old Masters (Conn, 1998, p. 197). Despite the effort to follow the European museum model emphasizing masterpieces, by 1887, the Director of the Met delivered an "Address on the Practical Value of the American Museum (Di Cesnola, 1887) to attest to the "purposes, scope and utility of such Institutions."

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The *Museum of Fine Art, Boston* (MFA) was chartered in 1870, the same year as The Met, though instead of three "Great Arts", the Trustees outlined three guiding Principles: art, education and industry. (Museum of Fine Arts, 1906, p. 202) In the same year, Massachusetts became the first state to legislate compulsory public school art education". (Bolin, 1990, p. 59) This act was intended

4. The South Kensington Museum in London served as a model for the museum's format. See also the Museum's website: http://www.philamuseum.org/information/45-19.html

5. Nevertheless, restructuring during the early 20th century led the museum to favor the examples of the Louvre and the Metropolitan, especially under the tenure of Benjamin Ives Gilman. See Conn (1998, p. 29)

6. In this case the use of term Museum also probably stemmed from the French use of *Musée du Louvre*.

7. Howe & Kent (1913, pp. 99-100) state that It was first conceived in Paris in 1866 to a group of wealthy Americans

8. See *A Brief History of the Museum* at http://metmuseum.org/press/general-information/2005/a-brief-history-of-the-museum

to spur the development of draftsmen, who would aid the manufacturing economy through an improvement of design quality. At the dedication of the MFA, the mayor hailed it as "crown of our educational system" (Museums of Fine Arts, 1876, p. 6, as cited in Harris, 1962). In their efforts to manifest education through the arts, the MFA made it a priority to put education into practice and not just hope that a cogent arrangement of collections would permit collections to speak for themselves as so many other museums had in the past. Rather, the MFA developed interpretive techniques, publications, classes and a library (Greenleaf, 1888, cied in Harris, 1962), inaugurating a new form of educating *through* art, not just about it.

Rather than imitate the Louvre, Boston initially looked to the South Kensington doctrine[9] as its muse. (Conn, 1998; Harris, 1962) That doctrine stated that good design was dependent on "honesty in construction, fitness of ornamental material, and decorative subordination," (Kouwenhoven, 1948, p. 91) an ethic that appealed to a state still influenced by Puritan views that required art to be useful in order to not be immoral. As the MFA's trio of principles suggests, art, education and industry would work harmoniously to achieve the aims of the founders. Improved industrial output was the goal. Education was its servant.

These three distinct institutions arose simultaneously in different American cities, each with rich traditions of history and culture. Over time they may have grown more similar, but at their creation each manifested the characteristics of its founders and their collections, offering up new definitions for what a museum should be and paving the way for museum studies in the US. While The Met was teaching *about* fine art, the MFA and the Philadelphia Museum of Art were teaching industry *through* art. The different approaches have been compared in a classic rich man/poor man juxtaposition, framing the Met as exclusive, pretentious and dilettante, and "Philly" and the MFA as useful and educational[10]—only later did the MFA try to escape that rut. (McClellan, 2008, p. 30) But that simple rich/poor characterization is a product of the cultural nationalism of the time and the long drawn-out American antipathy of useful versus frivolous art in the Puritan tradition. What is more important in the context of museum studies is that these museums offer two essential models for the emergence of museum studies in the coming decades; one emphasizing the actual and cultural value of fine art and the other bent on proving the practicality or usefulness of fine art.

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9. This doctrine is according to Walter Smith (1872), influential teacher and leader in art education. He was brought to Massachusetts to supervise the implementation of the new laws mandating drawing in schools.

10. Duncan places The Met at the center of a spectrum, where the MFA represented the elite museum catering to the wealthy, but this really occurred in the 20th century after the appointment of Gilman. See Harris, (1962).

The Principles of Museum Administration

By 1895, when George Browne Goode wrote his celebrated treatise on American Museum Administration, these early US art museums had become fully-formed, inspiring other art museums to emerge across the US in the larger cities and fully replacing scientific museums as the dominant form of museums in the US. Nevertheless, they had not yet spawned extensive writings on the subject of museums. That role historically goes to Goode, Assistant Secretary at the Smithsonian Institute.

In 1846, per the bequest of British scientist, James Smithson (1765-1829) an "establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men" (Smithson, 1826) was to be founded in Washington, under the name *Smithsonian Institution*. The bequest did not require a museum, but Congress eventually decided that the best way to fulfill Smithson's directive was through the creation of a library, art gallery, and museum, (Conn, 1998, p. 54) underscoring the traditional distinction between museums for science and galleries for art. Their primary focus, however, was originally science (Nagel, 1997, p. 348), as it seemed the obvious connection to knowledge to the men of the day. The first Secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry (1797-1878), developed a Program of Organization for the Smithsonian that reduced the role of both the library and the art gallery. The small collection of art it possessed was neglected. Henry's plan requires any art collections to be "useful arts". (Henry, 1847, Sec. I, Art. 3, Nos. 4 & 10) By 1850, Spencer Baird (1823-1887) was hired as the assistant secretary of the Smithsonian because of his experience classifying and recording zoological specimens (Rivinus & Youssef, 1992) further placing an institution-wide emphasis on science. Goode was hired for the same reason when Baird becomes Secretary. Meanwhile, the arrival of Darwin's theories in the US had led to a decline of science museums, (Orosz, 2002, p. 181) whose serious specimen collections were unable to compete with circus "Freak Shows" for money. The first US museums, largely oriented toward science, faded into esoteric research collections and were soon replaced in academic stature by universities. (Conn, 1998, ch. 2; Mumford, 1931, pp. 39-42) Only the Smithsonian well endured this period in its capacity as an "institution" rather than "museum" through bequest and federal support.

Under these conditions, two of the first and best recognized American treatises on the subject of Museums were produced by Goode. Presented at the Museums Association conference in the United Kingdom – as there was yet to be a Museums Association in the United States[11]-- the titles and substance already demonstrate a distinct reliance on practicality of museum work. What is less-known about this first American museological document is that "Relationships and Responsibilities of Museums" (Browne Goode, 1895) and then "Principles of Museum Administration" (Browne Goode, 1896) were predicated

11. Founded in the United States in 1906

on supplying a response for the "Use and Abuses of Museums," an 1882 essay by William Stanley Jevons and published in 1883, an English economist, to which there had yet been none in the US or UK.

Jevons article criticized Europe's museums in service to the people. Jevons himself lamented the lack of writing and training to be found on museum practice in the English language. Jevons call for professionalization spurred the founding of the Museums Association in England and subsequently inspired Goode to respond from America, where despite the boom in museums, there also lacked significant written treatises and training. It is also possible that already Goode sensed a direction in the new art museums that was heading counter to the public-minded institutions in service to the masses that both Jevons and Goode espoused. Goode, writing as a scientist for a scientific institution is intent to specify the "uses" of museums and implies a response to a lingering Puritan query of the value of arts or their usefulness.

Thus, when Goode responds to the question of the "use" of museums, he sets out his goals in scientific terms. These are: the "codification of accepted principles of museum administration" and the establishment of the "aims and ambitions of modern museum practice". The use of the terms "codification", "administration" and "practice" further underscore a general focus on practicality. Goode goes on to divide his essay into sections that define and quantify the logical elements of a successful museum practice. His approach is scientific and suited to his training in taxonomy. The final section on the "Future of Museum Work" presents Goode's vision of museums playing an "important role in the increase and diffusion of knowledge", echoing the foundational requirements of the Smithsonian Institution, but also creating "public appreciation for the material value of collections" and recognition of the function of public museums. (Browne Goode, 1896) On such ideals the Smithsonian Institute had been founded.

The Trusteeship: Managing Cultural Wealth and Taste

But Goode and Jevons, and to a great extent the Smithsonian and the museums of Europe, did not have to contend with private financing. Unlike European countries, America had no royalty, no ancient aristocracy that had accumulated vast collections over centuries. American art museums could not be started by opening the doors on existing collections. If art museums were to exist, they had to be started from scratch. Previous efforts had brought about societies to encourage fine arts, academies of art and design, and public galleries (Ibid., p. 15), but none had succeeded (Coleman, 1939, App. X). As the 19th century waned in the US, newly wealthy American industrialists, eager to shed the connotations of vulgarity and ostentation that came with the pejorative term "nouveau riche", sought European commodities to prove their sophisticated taste (Coleman, 1939, p. 14; Dana, 1917, p. 8; voir aussi Mumford, 1931) and to legitimize links, even specious ones, to European nobility. But whereas personal collections were a source of social pride, involvement in fine art museums even further enhanced the reputations of collectors and collections and through their business acumen they would change the model for the American museum.[12]

In the US, the federal government had long navigated religious tastes and mores about culture and education, usually avoiding discord by letting such enterprises be private, save for a few notable examples, like the Smithsonian Institute.[13] Thus in general most American museums of any sort are to this day private institutions, who may apply annually for state funds or Federal project grants. The lack of government support accentuated the dependence of museums on either popular appeal or the generosity of the rich. The founders of The Met knew this when they stated:

"It will be said that it would be folly to depend upon our governments either municipal or national for judicious support or control in such an institution for our governments as a rule are utterly incompetent for the task." (Howe & Kent, 1913)

Undaunted, founders of early art museums created a hybrid of private and government support. Along with land often ceded by cities (Tomkins, 1970, ch. 1), wealthy industrialists appointed themselves "custodians of culture" (Kouwenhoven, 1948, p. 88). In words of James Jarves, 19th century American art critic and collector: "Those who have won the leisure from making money, should know best how to expend it for their and their neighbor's good (1882)." The wealthy supplied art, endowment, and leadership in the form of a Trusteeship. The Trust was a British legal structure designed to help nobles keep their wealth from generation to generation (MacGregor, 1996, p. 120) that had already been employed at the British Museum and National Gallery, London.

But whereas in Britain the Trust was a bastion of the aristocracy, in America it was the tool of the *nouveau riche* industrialists in the Gilded Age. Within the museum examples presented, the ideas of value and practicality still stand out. Museum Boards of Trustees were (and often still are) composed of the wealthiest and most influential citizens. If we consider The Met as one model and the Philadelphia and Boston fine art museums as the other, the differences are clear.

In an unabashed effort to be the Louvre of the US, The Met had in mind lofty national ideals: It would set the national standard of artistic taste. Long deprived of European fine art, Victorian America was overrun by "monstrous plaster figures, daubed with crazy paint; mammoth cast-iron wash-basins called fountains; cast-iron architecture and clumsy gateways to public parks; shoddy portrait statues and inane ideal ones; of ornaments, pictures, and sculpture

12. On the administrative revolution in business, see Zunz (1990), esp. Chapters 1-3; and Chandler (2005), introduction and chapter 14.

13. We should note however, for the sake of clarity that today's national museums and institutes that comprise the Smithsonian receive only a portion of funding for the federal government. Collections are often acquired through private funds again avoiding conflict.

made to gull and sell (Jarves writing in 1864 as cited in Mumford, 1931, p. 185)." Rather than allow poorly manufactured imitations of cheap copies (Harris, 1962, p. 561) to continue to negatively influence the American cultural taste, those governing The Met tried to supply the *best* examples of the *finest* artwork in order to correct public taste and "inform on the subtle laws" of the arts. Membership on its Board of Trustees was thus limited to those who could contribute to this goal. By the early 1900s when financier J.P. Morgan presided over the trustees, he would assemble his wealthiest colleagues, turning the board into the most exclusive club in America (Tomkins, 1970, pp. 99, 106-107). Its orientation toward wealth created a model where membership was historically nepotistic, involving the same families for generations and the election of friends and colleagues in order to perpetuate the same values.

With fewer wealthy backers than in New York and in contrast to The Met model, the MFA and Philadelphia highlighted their intention to exhibit copies and casts in lieu of originals. This demonstrates the priority placed on education over collection. The importance placed on education was also reflected in a second model of Museum Trustees. At the MFA, for example, according to the articles of incorporation, Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology would each appoint three trustees, and that the Chairman of the Trustees of the Public Library, a Trustee of the Lowell Institute[14], the Secretary of the State Board of Education and the Boston Superintendent of Schools would each serve in an ex-officio capacity (ibid.). Harris (1962, p 549) compares this with the roster of Trustees at The Met (Howe & Kent, 1913, pp. 126-127) which included financiers and businessmen at the forefront of institutional interests, rather than educators. Education and the emphasis of industrial arts were to be the difference between the "cadaverous" Met "filled with treasures and spoils of conquest," and "*chefs d'oeuvre* of classic art, for the benefit chiefly of artists and amateurs." (Harris, 1962, p. 555, nt. 27) Rather, as stated by the MFA's first director "The designer needs a museum of art as the man of letters needs a library, or the botanist an herborium (Brimmer, 1880, p. 206)."[15]

Both models fell prey to the demands of capitalism in a society that did not fund their culture. The Trustees of both types were still dependent on a business and legal model that bowed to the need for financial support. Even if the museum itself was considered a not-for-profit enterprise it would soon be transformed by the governance of bankers, lawyers, and businessmen who were heavily influenced by the standards of efficiency, production, and preservation of investment. The very first Annual Reports issued by these first art museums demonstrates a dedication to the quantification of attendance for activities

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14. A Boston charitable organization founded in 1836 to fund public lectures for instruction and education of all citizens. See Chisholm (1911)

15. It was only toward the turn of the century, as the museum collection increased in terms of size, depth and value that some of the casts, copies and lesser works were stored away, according to Harris (1962, p. 559) and later directors emphasized the arts over industry and education as secondary objectives. See Conn (1998, p. 224).

and services in order to establish the value of the service the museum provides. Additionally, Trustees were increasingly concerned with the preservation of the financial investment reflected in a precious collection of art. The art was subjected to constant inventory as a form of wealth census. In the earliest lists, documentation gave as much space to basic identification, as it did to the names of donors, methods of acquisition, and financial value of the work of art. (M. Little, electronic correspondence, March 31, 2015) At the MFA in Boston separate folders were kept on donor information and financial value. (J. McCarthy, *interview*, June 10, 2015) Ongoing inventory in us museums was less a source of knowledge for research than it was a proof of ownership and record of value.[16]

For the first time in the United States emerging art museums became the dominant museum model and "rich men hobbying at art", as Coleman (1939, p. 14) put it, would alter the course of fine arts in the nation. (passim Kouwenhoven, 1948; Mumford, 1931) Subject to a federal government uninterested in funding national cultural institutions, museums became indebted to wealthy individuals forged in the ways of capitalism and industrial thinking. Moral propriety and usefulness gave way to practicality and value and bankers and business-men produced a new American product - US Museums Studies.

The First Museum Studies Course

"In the spirit of British Victorian reform, Americans wished to make the museum an instrument of education and inspiration to urban workers and artisans. Within a few short years, however, benefactors and trustees had transformed these museums by making them repositories for their private treasures and public legacies as well as their social ambitions." (Duncan, 2007, p. 25)

The utilitarian ideals of art museums such as the MFA and the Philadelphia Museum of Art slowly declined as they failed to produce a tangible improvement in industrial production (McClellan, 2008, p. 26) New directors in the early 20th century would orient museums increasingly toward fine arts and masterpieces. (*Ibid.* Harris, 1962; 2008) Nevertheless the earlier emphasis on education by these institutions would inspire in the new century a backlash to the seeming disdain for craft and design and the impetus to continue to improve museum education as the century wore on. It is this that gives some momentum to John Cotton Dana's ideas of a New Museum. Dana rejected museums as warehouses of the wealthy and sought to build in Newark, where he was founding director, a contrasting model that collected folk art and industrial

16. Even by the late 1930s, when the US finally founded a National Gallery, it, too, was at the behest and bequest of a wealthy founding donor who instituted a Board of Trustees composed of his friends and business partners. Their first actions were to establish and list the value of the collection and to hire a registrar (National Gallery of Art, 1938)

products and provided service to the community. His writings on museums serving a broader community through education are better known today.[17]

But the museum model provided by The Met and inspired by the Louvre attracted something even more important than public regard: wealthy donors. By the first decades of the 20th century, American art museums had gained an elite status thanks to the prominence of their founders, which further seduced rich patrons with the lure of reputation by association. Gifts of art, and moreover the acceptance and exhibition of such works, was a highly sought commodity. By 1917, only four years after the Revenue Tax had been established in the US, a deduction was established for donations of artwork to non-profit institutions (like museums) within the framework of the *War Revenue Act* of 1917. (Muthitacharoen & Goertz, 2011, p. 1) The deduction benefitted the rich by allowing them to deduct the value of donated art work from their federal income tax and sometimes allowed the complete avoidance of paying inheritance taxes. Because of the lack of government funding for museums, wealthy donors assured the supremacy of The Met as *the* museum model in the United States but moreover contributed to the rise of the art museum as pre-eminent to other museum types is the US (Fox, 1963, p. 18), an idea that can still be perceived today. It is under these conditions that Museum Studies began as a formal field of study at Harvard University.

Between 1908 and 1911, a few college-level education programs had been created and recognized by AAM (Cushman, 1984, p. 12). Each was short-lived or too narrowly focused to have as large an impact as the Harvard's. By 1917 at the formation for the American Association of Museum's Committee on Professional Training (COMPT) it was agreed that museum work needed to be professionalized. (Duncan, 2007, p. 177) In 1909, Edward W. Forbes, son of the co-founder of the Bell Telephone company, became the director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard. Already an art collector and donor to the Fogg, Forbes encouraged Harvard's wealthy alumni to donate paintings, vastly expanding the number of important works and creating what he saw as a laboratory for art historians. (Mongan, 1971) In 1914, Forbes asked his classmate and fellow art donor, Paul J. Sachs, to join the staff at the Fogg. A banker from a family of bankers (of the investment firm, Goldman-Sachs) Sachs was a means to accessing wealthy patrons (Duncan, 2007, p. 145) but Sachs demanded a proper position with responsibilities in administration, collections and teaching.

Sachs had been part of the evolution in business management that had come about in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. For over a decade he had worked in New York City as part of a new business culture that demanded efficiency and dynamic adaptation and a global perspective. When Sachs developed his famous "Museum Course" it was from this point of view, a practical engagement of museum work that embraced the values and models of business

17. See Dana (1914, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1927, 1929). For a longer treatment of Dana's impact on museum education see also McClellan (2008), pp. 28-31; 171-173 and Duncan (2007) *passim*.

management, not the theoretical engagement of art historians. “In museums, as in modern business practice, a managerial hierarchy with specialized skills replaced a generation whose authority came primarily from stewardship and wealth.” (Duncan, 2007, p. 80)

His course, fully titled “Fine Arts 15a : Museum Work and Museum Problems” reveals his objectives: the primacy of the collection and the acquisition of original and important works of art; well-ordered and pleasing exhibitions; academic rigor in museum research and publication; sound ethics and management practices, and constant networking with art world. (*Ibid*. p 3) Sach’s students experienced important practical aspects such as installation and publicity of exhibitions (*Ibid*., 212), as well as the business of the art world. With his family connections and the wealth of his own art collections, he introduced students to an international network and required them to be fluent in its workings. (*Ibid*., 130) Nevertheless, to meet the high standards of instruction at Harvard, Sachs’ Museum Course strongly emphasized the cultural value of masterpieces so as not to seem too vocational in nature. Students became connoisseurs of art, pursuing its academic foundations as well as the practical aspects of international dealing. Simultaneously, in order to avoid the lingering Puritan notions of art as useless, both Forbes and Sachs began to redefine the role of the Fogg and the *Museum Course* within the framework of “a Laboratory” (Lowell, 1924) for training professionals. (*Ibid*., 171) This framing justified the usefulness of the art museum and museum studies as its sub category and positioned the museum to better raise money.

Just as the Museum Course was coming of age, the First World War brought a new international status to the United States. Largely avoiding the enormous economic losses of Europe, the US government attained new economic, political and military power, while US collectors took advantage of the art market, adding to their growing collections. As collections grew, so too did the prominence of Sach’s Museum Course driven by Harvard’s reputation, his own leadership in the field and the demands for his help forming new leaders for America’s museums. Simultaneously, new technologies and the ramp up to World War Two spurred new levels of professionalization and systemized approaches that were merging with the museum world. As the Museum Course grew in stature, Sachs began to place hundreds of his students in the most important museums around the continent, thus cementing the foundations of US Museum Studies (Duncan, 2007) in connection to the earliest US art museum models.

Conclusion

This article began with a description of the US culture in the post-Civil War cultural environment that helped launch the museum era in the US. The first museums studies course in the US likewise comes of age between the First and Second World Wars, benefitting from international prominence as well as modern and systematic approaches to museum practice. It is thus fitting perhaps that we bookend the discussion of historical influences on US museum studies by mentioning how the upheaval of war turned the direction of museums and museum studies.

Today, Paul Sach's is not a well-known figure in US Museum Studies history. It is more likely that practitioners and students of the field will come into contact with the writings of Goode and Dana, or Theodore Low and Phillip Youtz among many others who tend to champion the more publicly educational approach of museums as opposed to the connoisseurship model promoted by Sachs. Moreover, the current trend in Museum Studies courses in and the US seems to owe much more to the idea of the museum in service to the public rather than the museum in service to a small group of wealthy benefactors. It is here where the specter of war once again shapes the museological discussion. While one museum era in the US is launched by the American Civil War, another is indirectly inspired by US intervention in Vietnam, an era which launches passionate challenges to institutional authority by previously disenfranchised groups (Duncan, 2007, p 18-19). The pluralism that we feel today being exuded by many of our most prominent writers is a direct descendant of this period that brought renewed focus to the previously invisible.

We are thus perhaps likely to disregard early contributions and histories that promote and respond to a different set of circumstances, certainly those that we are in the process of disrupting. Yet, as we have already considered here the direct influence of the early art museum models on the earliest museums studies course in the US, it perhaps merits some consideration of the extent to which the more progressive plural values prevalent in our museum studies courses today are present within our largest, wealthiest and most influential museum institutions. Do we still have a model based on practicality and value? Do the values of Sach's Museum Course endure?

Surely, in art museums at least, there is a significant focus on the primacy of collections. And though that statement chafes some philosophically, we must consider how today's collections are valued, insured, protected by security guards, alarms and locked glass cases. Their value is in their cultural importance but also in the financial investment made in them initially and continually. It is measured and assessed annually by numbers that reflect additions to their ranks and the upkeep of inventory and records. "Well-ordered and pleasing" exhibitions are still a mainstay of most museums with significant resources being put into their research and creation and maintenance. They require "academic rigor in museum research and publication" and therefore individuals who are well-trained to do so. These same individuals are required to have "sound ethics and management practices" and continually network in order to keep their museums running. These were the very tenets of Sach's Museum Course, which themselves echo the values of the first US art museums. And to this we can add the importance of the Trustees. They may be increasingly diverse in terms of age, gender, race or income in today's museums, but they still have a powerful influence on the direction of museums, that may seem democratic except that we see its origins here in the protection of wealth and power.

There is certainly a tension in the dual legacies that we have considered here. Whether its science versus art, or public education versus warehouses for the wealthy, or useful versus decorative, or South Kensington model versus the Louvre model, we desire to promote one over the other. But one has not entirely replaced the other, nor may it be possible to do so. As a new generation of museum practitioners emerges, a broader understanding of these negotiated territories, rather than favoritism of one over the other might help spur the emergence of a more flexible museum model.

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